THE FAMILY AND THE CHILD : THE ASIAN FAMILY'S STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

CATHERINE BERNARD

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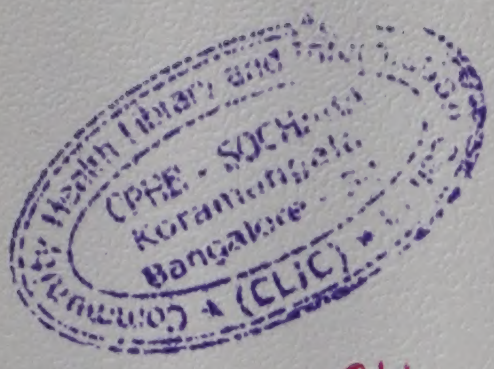
SERVICE AND RESEARCH FOUNDATION OF ASIA ON FAMILY AND CULTURE
(SERFAC)
No. 140, Manimangalam Road, Varadarajapuram,
Madras 600 048. India



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SOCHARA
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Community Health Cell
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Tel : (080) 25531518 email : clic@sochara.org
www.sochara.org

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by

Catherine Bernard

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OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP DISCUSSION GUIDE

I. At one time , " the family was the Whole of a person's society". "Today, it is said that the whole world has, in a sense, become a "global village," with the family constituting only a tiny part of it".

In the process of coalition of small social units into larger units, the family underwent a defunctionalization, i.e. functions it used to perform were taken over by institutions or other dominant groups. Some examples of this: education was taken over by schools; entertainment was taken over by theaters and mass media; economic production for almost anything of the family's basic demands, such as food, clothing, etc., is taken over by supermarkets, larger corporations and firms. The care of the handicapped and the aged has become the responsibility of specialized "homes" and institutions. With the advent of family-planning technologies, the privacy of the relationship between husband and wife has likewise been "invaded" by larger units of society.

II. The effects of this defunctionalization process has brought about a displacement of the family from its central role and place in society to the backstage. This has, therefore, deprived the family of its formative and caring functions, as well as of its own unique contribution to society.

III. If the family, in the midst of such a technological and competitive life style, must remain a non-formal, non-competitive community, where its members can come home and dare to be themselves, then the larger units of society and their different technologies must remain at its service, and not to be a dictator over it.

IV. It must also be remembered that the family and its members will always remain the objects of the manipulative tendencies of the larger societies and their technologies, which see in them the promise for their commercial and political gains.

V. The family must, therefore, be strengthened, if it is to survive the onslaughts of modern living. The only way to strengthen the family to stand up to or to withstand the tremendous pressures from the outside is to help the family rediscover and respond to its original and central role of "stewards of creation, partners, collaborators and co-creators with God in building a new society."

VI. Such a strengthening process is possible only through an authentic pro-life/family spirituality

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VII. The real challenge to the Church is to respond positively and creatively to the real contemporary Asian society, and to move from listening to intervention, from word to action, thereby making discipleship relevant to the times, faithful to the Gospel, and thus to be committed concretely in "the Asian family's struggle for life."

I. THE GLOBAL CRISIS AND THE ASIAN FAMILY'S STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

Introduction

In Familiaris Consortio, Pope John Paul II states:

> *On the one hand, there is a more lively awareness of personal freedom and greater attention to quality of interpersonal relationships in marriage, promoting the dignity of women and responsible parenthood. On the other hand, there is a crisis of values, mistaken concept of authority between parents and children, the growing number of divorces, the scourge of abortion and the contraceptive mentality. 1*

In keeping with the concern of the Holy Father and many other leaders in the field of family life and natural family planning, and with our own growing concern about the family in contemporary society, the Asian Family Service Centre, now known as the **Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture**, organized in Madras, India, a series of international congresses and workshops to create awareness about the realities that constitute human existence today - poverty, hunger and disease, illiteracy and ignorance, unemployment, social injustice, contemporary culture, technological life style, and their all pervading effects on "human kind" in general and the "family" in particular.

Each of these congresses and workshops brought together experts and specialists in the various disciplines of human sciences, anthropology, culture, health, political sciences, sociology, population, family planning, development, as well as grass roots-level workers, for exchange of opinion, discussion and dialogue, thereby providing an excellent platform for persons of different cultural and religious backgrounds

to meet and reflect on the forces that foster or hinder the dignity and wholeness of the family in contemporary society.

These congresses were held in succession through 1983-1991, and helped deepen the awareness of the crisis that is engulfing the developing nations. Cognizant of the Asian situation, and "the family of Asia" being the focus of our concern, over seventy-five percent of the participants at these congresses were Asian. Hence, the statements that emerged at the conclusion of each congress have a strong bearing on the Asian reality.

With this background, relevant extracts from the statements are presented in this section of the workshop guide, and forms the basis of our praxis.

1. The First International Congress on the Family: January 26-February 1, 1983, Madras, India, on the theme: "Family at the Service of Life in Contemporary Society"

The three hundred participants from thirty countries focused their attention and reflected on the theme of the congress. This reflection helped throw light on some of the crucial and sensitive problems that face contemporary family life.

a. In the Perspective of a Just Society and Common Pilgrimage with All People of Good Will:

We realize that the major problem that confronts the world at large and the countries of the Third World is dependence and injustice in human relationships , personal and structural. This is an interconnected and interacting reality in socio-economic, political and cultural spheres, at international, national and local levels. Due to sustained exploitation, oppression and domination by a small minority, the vast majority of the people have been dehumanized, the gap between the rich and the poor is ever widening, making the rich richer and the poor poorer. It is within this situation of injustice that we view the whole problem of population and poverty. (1.2).[2]

b. Problem Identification

It was generally felt that family life in our countries, although it is beginning to be strongly exposed to the unhealthy winds blowing from within and from without, still maintains the basic values of its cultural

past. Nevertheless, it was agreed that it would be unwise to rely too much on our past experience of the traditional stability and sanity of our families and that adequate steps should be taken from now to counterbalance the devastating effects of the evils that are corroding the integrity of so many families (2.1).[3]

In the light of a theological reflection on the family as a community of love and as a domestic Church, we have considered the situation of the family, and this reflection has convinced us that severe fissures and fractures have appeared on the family horizon in the countries of our region. The family which was meant to be the community of love, of total self-giving, has thus been affected by the world situation (2.2).[4]

2. The International Workshop on the Family: December 8-14, 1994, Madras, India, on the theme: "Family in a Technological Society"

The research workshop, which was a follow-up of the first congress, tried to identify and address more than just a complex of different technologies in the phenomenon that constitutes our "technological age."

While "the family" is extremely different, yet similar in some ways, in the various countries of Asia - in the areas of culture, customs, economic organization as well as social and demographic situations, technological growth, etc., it is still possible to identify common areas in terms of societal problems and trends.

Technology includes many diverse elements and distinct entities. Yet it is one reality, with varying, interconnecting and interrelated aspects, all primarily responsible for the dramatic and rapid changes we experience in almost every dimension of life. These changes profoundly condition relationships both within the family and society at large.

This reflection was done by one hundred participants from seventeen countries and their findings find place in the statement that emerged at the conclusion of the workshop:

a. In the Context of a Global Society within the Interaction Between Family and Technology

The vision maintained throughout the deliberations of the workshop was a new world which is being reshaped by the scientific discoveries

and technological advances. This vision included a vivid awareness of the inequality in the distribution of the benefits of science and technology. The chasm between the haves and "have-nots" would only increase, unless there are greater social justice benefits. The main concern of the workshop was that the family should so cope with the new situation so as to be the basis of, and contribute to the emergence of, a more human, just and ecologically-balanced society. The concern extended to encouraging the process for realizing universal brotherhood in which equality and freedom, fellowship and peace, the deepest yearnings of human kind can be experienced by all, in spite of several forces working to the contrary (1. 1.1).[5]

The family is the oldest and most basic human institution and unit of society. More than any other institution. It has been affected by the profound and rapid changes witnessed by the world today,. Many families are struggling to live in fidelity to authentically human values, while some others have become totally bewildered. Some even doubt if the institution has any more purpose at all. However, there are families which, even amidst the crisis of the present-day society, remain faithful to the demands of love, justice and solidarity. But the danger of the human person becoming a victim of a certain technological and consumer mentality is ever present. In fact, the power of technology may lead people to control and manipulate not only the environment but also the very lives of others (1.2).[6]

The situation in which the family finds itself has both bright and dark spots, sometimes one feels convinced that modern times are better than bygone years, while at other times the so-called progress seems to be an illusion. On the one hand, we find greater sensitivity to an awareness of personal freedom, more meaningful relationships, and desire to build a more just society. On the other hand, many fundamental values, like the sanctity of human life, the inherent dignity of the human person and the sense of responsibility for the world, seem nonexistent. The family is being called upon at this hour to play new roles and be prepared to meet new challenges. As an enduring human institution and with its resilience beyond doubt, it can fulfill this task (1.3).[7]

Technology in all its forms is one of the major factors contributing to the present situation of the family. Technology in the wider sense of the term is constituted by the manifold ways in which the person tries

to enrich oneself, create a more just society, master the environment and make this world a better place to live in. Thereby, the human person ought to become more human. There are families which even amidst the crisis of the present-day society, remain faithful to the demands of love, justice and solidarity (1.5).[8]

b. Ambivalence of Technology and Need for Discernment Before A Vision of Hope

The created reality as it comes from God's hands is good. The human person, too, shares in this goodness of creation. But the entire creation, including humankind, had been affected by evil. Its forces and consequences are visible in human activities and in the structures of society. This ambivalence colors everything that the person is and does. Thus, technology too becomes ambivalent. At certain moments and in certain situations, technology shows forth the greatness and goodness of the person, while at other times it becomes immensely influenced by the evil in the person, and seems to be one of the forces that seek to destroy or deform her/him. This calls for a serious discernment, both with regard to the development of technology and its use (2.1).[9]

In this spectrer we wonder whether our vision can be realized and our aspiration fulfilled when evil seems to be so widespread and insurmountable (2.2).[10]

c. Issues

From our discussions the issues which concern the interaction of technology and the family, are grouped into four: 1) work, 2) mass media, 3) procreation, and 4) health.

All human work is valuable , whether one is remunerated for it or not. Thus, the work of the wife and mother in the home and of all members of the family for the maintenance of the home is worthy of respect. All persons require the necessities of life. Those who are unable to provide for themselves, whether for reasons of disability or unemployment, must be helped by society, first of all by creating employment opportunities. Currently, the basic means of sustaining life are seldom available for the unemployed (3.1.1).[11]

Some workplaces are so substandard that people are depersonalized,

if not almost dehumanized. This is an inverse of priorities, which demand that the human person must not be exploited for the sake of production (3.1.2.).[12]

A technological society is one in which the basic relationships are often built on material productivity or the capacity to produce and not on interpersonal dialogue. This can easily lead to a new kind of slavery in which people are exploited for financial gain. Such a society does not place a high premium on building and maintaining the family as one's "home" but merely as the provider of one's material needs (3.1.3.).[13]

As the result of urbanization and industrialization many families are now nuclear. The parents of nuclear families have the full responsibility for the support and guidance of their children, unlike in previous generations. The press, radio. T.V. and video have become other forces which compete with the parents in the education of the young. The mass media, particularly the TV, invade our homes and brings the world in. This widens our horizon but can also insert unwelcome ideas. The consumerism which many programs project can compete with more interpersonal values, to the point where the home may no longer be the site of re-energizing and fostering of relationships (3.2.1.).[14]

The most powerful human functions are those of thinking; willing and loving. While education is designed to socialize children into the family, culture and nation, the recently - accepted population limitation policies have sought to achieve a quick reduction of family size by a combination of mass media and action - oriented programs (3.3.1).[15]

Because of the population problem the value of human procreation has been downgraded in the minds of many. This is a great loss, as it is in the procreating of a person who is our equal in dignity that we attain the summit of human creativity (3.3.2).[16]

The freedom of conscience of every person must be respected in the formation of public policy. When there are substantial differences in life issues, such as sterilization and abortion, these cannot directly or indirectly be imposed by any individual, group or authority on anyone (3.4.1).[17]

While sophisticated medical care is within the reach of a few, comprehensive primary health care is still not available to vast sections of people. (3.4.1.). [18]

The gas tragedy in Bhopal has shown that technological progress, especially in the industrial sector, is often blind to health hazards, such as environmental pollution (3.4.2.).[19]

Advancement in technology that is insensitive to human values has resulted in the proliferation of nuclear arms which threaten to annihilate humanity itself (4.4.3).[20]

3. World Congress on the Family : November 1-7, 1986, Madras, India, on the theme : "Family and Culture"

In keeping with the objectives of the earlier congress and workshop, the World Congress on "Family and Culture" engaged in a scientific analysis of what constitutes contemporary culture and its influences on family life in today's society.

In this process the Congress took stock of what constitutes modern culture and its bearing on actual reality, its impact on persons and family, with focus on the Asian Family.

In line with their deliberations, the two hundred and forty participants of different religious backgrounds, from forty-one countries of the world, covering all five continents, stated :

The Congress focused on the relationships between family and culture and their mutual impact. Understanding cultures as a complex of attitudes, symbols, world views, meanings and value systems, institutions and behaviour patterns, it tried to study in depth the role of technology and religion in shaping family and culture. It also dealt with the research status of natural family planning around the world (0.3).[21]

This common search was situated in the context of a socio-political and cultural analysis, together with an exposure to the reality of family life in and around Madras. We visited families in slums, fishermen and agricultural villages, etc. There, through direct contact with the living conditions of families, the participants began to enter into a new perception of the forces that foster and hinder the dignity and wholeness of family and culture (0.4). 22

Thus, we were also helped to discover the "culture of poverty". Through this discovery, we became more aware of global injustice structured in relationships of domination and dependency (0.5).[23]

a. Family and Culture : An Analysis of Forces Affecting Them

The family as a basic unit of society is being subject to blatant and subtle forms of injustice on the local level, as also on the level of the global community. In our analysis we have discovered that these forms of injustice are being perpetuated by socio-economic structures, systems of political power, control of technology and the ideological use of culture and religion (1.2).[24]

The poverty of many is the price for the affluence of the few. The production of economic wealth, its use, the distribution of its benefits and the planning for, as well as the projection into, the future are all controlled and determined by the powerful few. This process operates both at the local and global levels as an interrelated system of economic injustice. Some of the aspects of this system of injustice are unfair trade practices, developmental aid leading to indebtedness, child labour, unemployment, racism, forced migration and the unjust treatment of working women. This also includes the gearing of the economic system to meet the consumer needs of an elite group rather than to satisfy the basic needs of the people. All these factors contribute to the deterioration of the quality of family life (1.3).[25]

We also discovered that political systems and power structures exercise domination over decision-making processes in society. Political power, concentrated in the hands of a few, acts as a powerful support for the maintenance of the oppressive socio-economic system. The exercise of this kind of political power renders a vast majority of people powerless and voiceless in deciding their place and role in their own family and in society. This situation leads the poor to a state of helplessness and imposes upon them the culture of silence (1.4).[26]

In today's society, with such unjust socio-economic and political systems, technology is not neutral. With regard to industrial technology the choice which determine production, distribution and consumption are made by the privileged few. In recent years advances in high technology in developed countries have become their exclusive preserve, making earlier technologies obsolete (1.5.1).[27]

Similarly, communication technologies are used by the very same few to manipulate information, distort the perspective of values concerning basic needs and wants, and project particular life-styles (1.5.2).[28]

The same distortion is taking place in the realm of biotechnology, genetic engineering and human reproduction (1.5.3).[29]

Religion is a force that permeates human experience, influencing culture and its interweaving attitudes, concerns, views and perspectives. While the institutionalized form of religion has often been associated with reaction and oppression, supporting and justifying the current world view and unjust structures, it is true that religion has played a prophetic role in the reform and reconstruction of society. Today there is an increasing recognition of the plurality of living faiths and of the value of interreligious understanding and co-operation that go to assist in the creation of a more humane and just society (1.6).[30]

b. Identification of Areas Of Concern

Through a critical analysis of the forces shaping family and culture, the participants identified the following areas of concern that needed on-going discernment and response.

The participants discovered the emergence of a new culture involving the majority of families, one that may be termed the culture of poverty. Some of the elements of this culture are the presence of institutionalized violence, a sense of hopelessness and resignation. At the same time, such a culture also displays a great trust in divine providence and a fidelity to religious practices, and a strong sense of solidarity, openness to people and human dignity, despite the subhuman conditions and the degradation of the environment (2.1).[31]

Unemployment, especially in developing countries, poses a serious threat to the security and well-being of family life and brings about a loss of the sense of personal worth. Far from being a product of the unwillingness of individuals to work, insufficiency of jobs or a lack of education and unemployment are results of systematic injustice. (2.2).[32]

The systems of formal education as it exists in most developing countries domesticates rather than liberates. This type of education is so well integrated with the system of exploitation and oppression that it is hardly capable of arousing the consciousness of people towards social transformation (2.3).[33]

The growing secularization of the family is pushing religion into a more or less private area of life, thus depriving it of its social and liberating

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potential for the family and society. There is indeed an authentic secularity that rests on the fact that the world is God's creation with its own legitimate autonomy. This authentic secularity is being threatened by religious fundamentalism and communalism and is creating deep divisions in family and society (2.4).[34]

Despite a gathering of momentum in movements for the liberation of the woman and an affirmation of the equality of women and men as persons, communities in different parts of the world show overt and covert forms of male domination and continue to discriminate against women, thereby creating a low self-image. The contraceptive culture is a contributing factor to the depersonalization of women (2.5).[35]

The evil of abortion, which in a male-dominated society appears in the form of selective elimination of female foetuses, is a denial of the basic right to life (2.6).[36]

Another kind of oppression of the family appears in the form of child labour, especially in developing countries. A family has to be on the very edge of despair to let a child go away from its home to become a bread winner. Child labour is the product of an unjust society that creates and maintains unemployment and unjust wages. Child labour is not just a result of poverty; it is an effect of unjust labour relations and means of production (2.7).[37]

Technologies for population control are instruments of the injustices of the global system. Policies of population control are generally linked with the fear of lowering the standard of an affluent lifestyle, unfair trade relations, inequitable distribution of resources and the operation of multinationals. All this leads to the destruction of conjugal values and the quality of family life. Ultimately, it is the family itself which discerns and decides its size with responsibility and in accordance with its welfare and the good of society (2.8).[38]

The effect of the forces enumerated above has brought about a displacement of the family from its central role and place in society to the backstage. This has deprived the family of its formative and caring functions, as well as of its own unique contribution to society (2.9).[39]

4. International Congress on the Family: March 3-9, 1991, Madras, India, on the theme: "The Family - Builder of a New Society"

The whole process of 'modernization" is an orientation to power, and is manifested in various forms of disorders in society, such as radical changes brought about by the combined impact of technology, a state of continuous war, racial conflicts, violence, the invasion of personal freedom, the decline of humanistic and spiritual values and the loss of human connectedness.

The ninety-eight participants from eighteen countries who participated in the Congress, "The Family - Builder of a New Society", voiced their concern through the statement which marked the conclusion of the Congress.

a. The Family in the Global Crisis of the 1990s

There is a global crisis of vast and profound proportions. The family the fundamental unit of society, has been deeply affected by it (1.0).[40]

The challenge to the global society comes from the overarching process going on in the world, called modernization (1.2). [41]

Modernization is a process of people consciously participating in the direction and nature of change as they encounter new challenges. But the way modernization is actually taking place is an ambiguous process, especially in its scientific and technological dimensions (1.2.1).[42]

Science and technology have immense potential to enhance the quality of human life and happiness. But when it is controlled by some dominant groups or institutions, whether national or multinational, whose motive is merely profit, it becomes an instrument of subjugation, manipulation and exploitation of people. It often creates an ethos of life characterized by consumerism, materialism and hedonism for some, and of poverty, oppression and marginalization for others (1.2.2.).[43]

Industrialization, another dimension of modernization, has had disastrous effects on many families in developing countries of the South. The introduction of certain industrial technology does not necessarily herald progress. Often it replaces human persons with machines, leading to mass unemployment. So, on the one hand, wealth and profit increase

for the owners of the machines; and on the other hand, unemployment and poverty also increase for the workers who have only their labour to offer. The value theory that supports this sort of industrialization is the subordination of labour to capital, of the human person to profit (1.2.3.)[44]

Alongside these effects there are also displacement, uncertainty about employment, even joblessness and redundancy, due to newer technologies replacing human skills; these have been solidly linked to the breakdown of family life. Social scientists have generated data showing that increases in unemployment are associated with rises in infant mortality, child abuse, alcoholism, suicide, heart disease and most crimes, including murder. Few occurrences short of death have so profound an impact on family life. This suffering both at the micro and macro-levels is incredibly costly, to say nothing of the vast waste of human resources.

Inflation too is devastating to family life. The erosion of the purchasing power of many people during the past decade not only represents a relentless march towards poverty but it has undercut most deeply those who can afford it least - the poor and low-income families.

Rapid urbanization is the process that usually accompanies industrialization in the developing countries. There is a mass exodus of peasants, the landless, the destitute and the youth from the villages to the cities in search of some fringe benefits from industrialization. This exodus has created innumerable slums and squatter colonies, which present a pathetic sight of misery and squalor (1.2.4).[45]

There is an urgent need for spiritual and cultural values to humanize the brutal aspects of economics and politics. Otherwise, economics becomes only a matter of money and profit, and politics a selfish struggle for power (1.2.5).[46]

Even Asian religions lose their power to humanize people when they lose their sense of the transcendent. Religion emptied of the transcendent dimension of human persons can become either a personal matter without social responsibility, or an instrument of religious fanaticism, manipulated by dominant groups (1.2.6).[47]

It is this type of modernization, controlled by a few dominant groups and institutions, that began in the developed nations and is now itself in a state of crisis, that has caused the crisis in most countries of the

developing world. For the teeming millions of families of the South, burdened by the crisis, what began as an energy crisis in the 1970s became the debt crisis in the 1980s, and now the ecological crisis in the 1990s. They are impoverished economically, made powerless politically and are classified as anonymities culturally (1.3.).[48]

b. The Encounter of Today's Technological Culture with Tradition and Existing Patterns of Living.

All over Asia, as well as in other countries of the South, there are millions of families suffering the dehumanizing effects of the clash between today's technological culture and their own traditional and existing patterns of living (2).[49]

Today's technology, whether in the field of industry, communications or medicine, invades and pervades every facet of human existence. The "apartment culture" has taken over, and the "luxury apartment" has become the key word in real estate selling. Along with such a lifestyle, various habits undergo change, e.g., "package-food" and "fitness-fever" and other items in "personal packaging."

Furthermore, such a culture seriously distrupts the traditional values and existing patterns of living, often depriving families of their individual identity and national dignity (2.1).[50]

The massive number of families living below the poverty line can easily succumb to the disintegrative socio-economic, political and cultural forces. Many families are fragmented or are one-parent families. Often they are by-standers and onlookers at their own degradation, helplessness, alienation and loneliness (2.1.1).[51]

Unfortunately, very often the God-given dignity of human persons, particularly of women and children, is trampled upon in physical violence, rape, bride-burning, prostitution, dowry, child labour and above all, in the merciless killing of the unborn child (2.1.2).[52]

Yet, despite this terrible onslaught against the family - husbands, wives and children - there exists a tremendous resilence of the human spirit, that refuses to be crushed and destroyed (2.2).[53]

On the one hand, there are families of good will that have undergone a radical change of self-emptying, from being immersed in the milieu

of the poor. On the other hand, there is the rising tide of dispossessed families, conscientized and struggling for their rightful place in society. Together, these two groups can grow into strong grassroots-level communities, with vast potential to breakdown the structures of oppression and to build up a new society of justice, peace and love.

5. Realities of the Child in Asia Today

The former President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, in 1986 asked one of the most crucial questions of the decade: "Must we STARVE our children to pay our debts?".[54]

The World Food Council's Agenda for the Decade 1990-2000 placed on record that 14 million children under the age of 5 die every year in the Third World. The same report speaks of street children - No one knows how many there are! Estimates vary between 100 million and 200 million, Commentators have identified 3 distinct groups:

60% "on the street"	:	i.e. children who work and survive on the street but live with their families.
33% "of the street"	:	children who view the street as their home. Many of these have unwillingly left their home and wish to go back.
17% are abandoned	:	children who live like the others, but with all family ties severed.[55]

Statistics from the International Labour Organization state that there are 50 million working children in the world, most of whom are in the most developing countries - in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Since 1979 the figure has doubled or tripled, says the same report.

The types of work these children are employed in are, factory, mines, as self-employed street vendors. Little girls are employed in small industries where they handle metallic wires which are so fine that they lose their eye-sight before they are six or eight years old. The vast majority are engaged in agricultural activities.[56]

While International and National Human Rights and child-oriented agencies are of the consensus that the problem of sexual exploitation of children has increased dramatically in Asia since the 1980s. UNICEF calls the problem of children being forced into prostitution as "one of

the most abusive, exploitative and hazardous forms of child labour," and states that it is becoming more widespread. (The estimated incidence in Asia is of one million children). Several countries in South East Asia have admitted that tens of thousands of their children are being exploited as prostitutes (Thailand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Taiwan). Clearly, given the tender age of these children and the underage victims, society as a whole and the full range of social institutions, including the family, have failed to provide a fundamental basic right - that of protection of the child against sexual and physical abuse, neglect, cruelty, and emotional maltreatment, exploitation, discrimination and inhuman degradation. The irony and tragedy are that in these situations not only are society and parents unable to meet the basic needs of children, they are also being asked or compelled to sell their bodies to contribute to their family's or society's economic needs and problems. [57]

With regard to health, facts from UNICEF state :

- Nearly one in 70 infants dies before reaching the age of one in the industrial countries, while one in 13 dies before age one in developing countries.
- About four million below five in the developing countries die each year from diarrhoea and related causes. Of these deaths about two and a half million could be prevented by low-cost oral rehydration therapy.
- Everyday, over nine thousand under-fives die in the developing countries from one of the six preventable diseases. And diseases/neonatal tetanus being the largest causes of neonatal deaths.
- About 150 million are malnourished in terms of being underweight for their age.
- Nearly 80% of the population in the developing countries have access to safe water in urban areas, while only about 40% do in rural areas, and about only one-third of the approximately 660 million children under five living in developing countries have access to adequate sanitation.[58]

UNICEF's figures on education state :

- Over one fifth of children of primary school age in the developing countries, that is about 130 million, are not attending school.
- Nearly 60% of children of secondary school age in the developing countries, that is about 280 million, are out of school.
- One-quarter of girls of primary school age in developing countries are not attending school, whereas only one-seventh of boys of the same age and about one-third of primary-enrolled drop out of school before completing four grades. [59]

a. The Child and Family

The continuing deplorable conditions of children in Asia are often blammed on the parents. However, seldom does a parent of good mind neglect her/his child. If there is neglect, it is because of the difficulties the parents themselves are facing.

The child's situation is reflective of the crisis situation of its parents, just as the crisis situation of parents are reflective of the crisis situation happening in their community and in their society.

For nations of the developing and developed countries, it is noteworthy to analyse how domination-subservience relations with foreign powers are related to deprivation of food to a hungry child.

b. The Children and Society

Children are often referred as "the next generation," for it is through the children that life as a people continues. Children are the inheritors of the world, not only of development but of destruction as well.

Being inheritors, however, does not mean that they have no role in society today. Children are an integral part of society. They can act and be acted upon by the environment and vice-verse. They have minds of their own, and at the stage they are in, they act as persons and parts of society.

Children also contribute to society in various ways, such as working children trying to earn in order to help argument family income. Not

to mention their contribution in terms of household maintenance, such as fetching water, caring for younger siblings, etc. Even infants have a contribution, such as bringing delight to parents' psyche after a hard day's work.

Children are the most vulnerable to crisis in society. They have no legal personality, except that of their parents. Thus, they have no voice in matters affecting their lives. And in spite of comprising more than half of the population, remain the silent majority.

6. Conflict of Forces at the Various Levels in Asia

The social patterns of the modern Asian community are in a state of continual flux. There is a whole range of violence used against members of the family-from the overt violence arbitrarily used by the military against their own citizens, to the violence used by family members in attempts to resolve conflicts in the family.[60]

It has also been noted that "frustration over the increasing demands of society is seen as one of the major causes of breakups and violence in the family. The inability to cope with rising expectations has led to tension and misunderstanding and family ties are broken as a result of these tension".[61]

On the more optimistic side, we might point to the many families in Asia that are trying to live authentic human and family values, and finding identity, purpose and goal in God their creator. Such families become communities of life and love, where every member accepts responsibility in a spirit of genuine respect and concern, thus responding to the family's sublime vocation to become co-creator with God and transformers of society.

II. THE VOCATION OF THE FAMILY : THE BASIS FOR MINISTRY

Introduction

There is no area of human life on which most people today are so dependent for personal happiness and fulfillment as that of love between man and woman, a love that is made lasting in marriage and family life.

There is also no other sphere in which faith and life are so intimately in contact with each other as in marriage and family life.

Therefore, the relationship of mutual partnership between husband and wife in marriage, and that of their relationship with their children, deserve to be helped, supported and promoted in every way by the Church — this is the basis for ministry.

1. The Beauty of Human Love

Human love, the love between man and woman between husband wife, is so good and so beautiful that it is considered the most adequate sign of God's love for his people. i.e. the image and sumbol of the Convenant between God and His people. In the encyclical Familiaris Consortio, Pope John Paul II highlights the goodness and beauty of human love when he stresses that the human person created in God's own image and likeness is called into existence through love and for love, and that both marriage and virginity are actuations of the most profound truth of the human person, being "created in the image of God."

In Gaudium et Spes (No.48ff.) and Humanae Vitae, the Church has extolled the nobility of married love, because "it derives from God and finds its supreme origin in him who is "love", the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."[62]

a. Christ : the Norm for Human Love

Jesus, the word of The Father who became flesh himself, consecrates flesh, sex and family life when he enfleshes, and thus fully reveals, the love of God, showing that love is a total self - gift ; being wholly directed and unswervingly oriented to the other — the other must live, the other must grow, the other must blossom, the other must be sanctified, the other must be without spot of wrinkle, the other must be nourished and cherished as one nourishes and cherishes one's own body. The intimacy of the marital union, in which the two spouses become one flesh, most beautifully completes the total self-gift of husband and wife and resembles most closely God: the Father who is wholly self-giving, the Son who is the total self-gift to the Father, and the Spirit who is the fruit of the total self-giving, of the Father and the Son. The bodies of husband and wife thus express a deep spirituality: complete self-gift and surrender, leading to a communion wherein the being "one flesh," the twoness of two persons, has almost been overcome. Thus, they express the very oneness of God's own communion, the oneness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, This Triune

God has so blessed and gifted woman and man ;that their marital union is the only communion which can bring forth new life. This love is life-giving and person-creating, and becomes a sign of the creativity and fruitfulness of God's own love.

The example of this self-giving love is Jesus himself, who became the grain of wheat that died in order to bring forth hundredfold fruit (Jn 12:24-25; Phil 2:7). Without a spirituality that demands constant incarnation, it is difficult for a marriage to maintain itself. But when this love becomes incarnate, it becomes the most adequate visible sign of God's own love. In the "beauty of human love" human love is a given and experienced reality and serves as an adequate term of comparison for God's love for his people. In Paul's teaching, particularly in 1 Cor : 13 and Ephesians 5:21-33, Christ's love is a given, and experienced reality for Christian spouses. It becomes, therefore, their task and mission to incarnate that love towards one another, their children and the world. The more this task is realized, the more Jesus' love becomes a visible reality in the marital relations. The more adequate it is as a sign, the more real it is as a sacrament, for a sacrament is a living, dynamic and on-going event. The sacramental mission begins after the celebration of the sacrament.

In the family, which Vatican II calls a school for deeper humanity (GS, No. 52), husband and wife, in the first place, but also "all the members of the family, each according to his or her own gift, have the grace and responsibility of building, day by day, the communion of persons" (FC, No. 21).[63] Thus family life becomes a lifelong pilgrimage, a *Yatra*, in which the disciples follow their *Guru*, Christ who is the center of their hearts and their home and He who leads them to the fullness of life.

2. Family: the Domestic Church

The family is called the ecclesia domestica, (the little Church or the Church in miniature), because Luke's vision of a Christian community (cf: Acts 2:44-47 and 4:32-35) and Paul's understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ (cf. i Cor 12:12-31) are most perfectly and visibly realized in the Christian home. Through the love relationship of parents - with regard to each other and to God — children grow up in love, learn by experience and come to know in reality that love is the most precious value in life, and that love is stronger and more lasting than

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the future of human-kind, in spite of all the countersigns, and concomitant problems.

Thus the mission of the family can be specified in the following tasks;

a. Children: the Supreme Gift of Marriage

"Parents should regard as their proper mission the task of transmitting human life and educating those to whom it has been transmitted" (GS, No. 50).[64] The same document clearly teaches: "Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents." Again, the document explicity links marriage with the task of transmitting life. In other words, the two partners, who have the inalienable right to make an honest judgement regarding the number of children (GS, No.87) must interpret their particular reality and situate it in all its dimensions in order to arrive at the proper decision. Interpretation implies that, while transmitting human life, they have to take into account thoughtfully their own welfare, that of their children, and the material and spiritual conditions of time and place (GS, No. 50).[65] Husbands and wives are not masters but stewards of life.

b. Education and Faith-Formation

Parents should not only transmit life but they must also educate those to whom they transmit life. It is irresponsible to give life to persons, if the parents cannot educate them, for parents must be acknowledged as first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it. It devolves on parents to create a family atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and others that a well-rounded personal and social development will be fostered among the children. Hence, the family is the first school of those social virtues which every society needs.

c. The Family and Justice

In many developing countries many families experience social injustice, even within the family (e.g., when parents deprive children of education, especially the adequate education of girls), and outside the family (through unemployment and under employment, over expenditure and consumerism, caste and class differences and child labour). Such families are to be made aware about the contradictions

in society, the roots of these evils, and educate them on the values Christ stood for and the counter-values in the world around.

d. Family : an Evangelizing Family

The Holy Father referred to it at Puebla: "The future of evangelization depends in great part on the Church of the home." The task to share the treasure of our faith is rooted in our baptism but receives new strength from the sacrament of marriage. Thus, we are enabled to transmit our faith and to sanctify and transform our present society according to God's plan" (FC, No. 52).[66] The Apostolic Exhortation then continues: "Particularly today, the Christian family has a special vocation to witness to the paschal covenant of Christ by constantly radiating the joy of love and the certainty of the hope for which it must give an account. The Christian family loudly proclaims both the present virtues of the Kingdom of God and the hope of a blessed life to come. "67

Conclusion

Pope John Paul II reminds us that :

> The modern Christian family is often tempted to be discouraged, and to be distressed at the growth of its difficulties. It is an eminent form of love to give back to the family reason for confidence in itself, confidence in the riches it possesses by nature and by grace, and confidence in the mission God has given it (FC, No. 86).[68]

III. A SPIRITUALITY OF THE FAMILY

Introduction

In the encyclical Centesimus Annus, Pope John Paul II states :

> It is necessary to go back to seeing the family as the sanctuary of life. The family is indeed sacred: it is the place in which life-the gift of God-can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic growth. In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life (39).[69]

For the Church in Asia , "Discipleship in Service to Life," should mean promoting a culture of life at the very sanctuary of life itself, i.e., "the family," by :

- ❒ affirming life
- ❒ promoting life
- ❒ defending life
- ❒ engaging in the dialogue of life.

The Church in Asia, both in its life and mission, has to take seriously an authentic "pro-life" spirituality. Such a spirituality will empower the family to be truly at the service of life. For persons working with families, any pro-life effort divorced from or devoid of religious experience can hardly be true "service to life."

Hence *a spirituality of the family is both a pro-life spirituality and a "service to life spirituality."*

1. Characteristics of a Spirituality of the Family

a. A Spirituality of Experience

Marriage and family life are experienced as the most concrete and total incarnation of God who is love, after the pattern of the world who became flesh. It is in marital union that the "wholly being of and for the other is experienced lived and manifested, it is in parental love that the parents wholly empty themselves to give life to the fruits of their love.

b. A Spirituality of the Mystery of Being

Once the discovery of the Mystery of Being is experienced , we can discover it in ourselves, in others and in God. We arrive at a level of depth at which we can truly be ourselves and articulate our own experience- God's indwelling in both partners and ultimately in the whole cosmos. This awareness of God's universal presence is to be lived and shared and constitutes the foundation of a living faith.

In India, this awareness stands at the basis of ahimsa: all forms of life are considered sacred and inviolable as they are manifestations of the Divine. There can be no better basis for a radical "pro-life" mentality.

c. Marriage: a Pilgrimage, a Yatra :

Several Asian traditions consider life as a pilgrimage, a movement. The concept of pilgrimage is always important in marriage spirituality, because it indicates that marriage is a vocation, a journey during which the two partners, recognizing the richness of each other's personality, journey towards the Absolute. When the mystery character of the other is respected and fostered, every new day holds new promises, new discoveries and marriage becomes a true response to a call, "a vocation"

d. A Spirituality of Renunciation and Non-Attachment

Renunciation and non-attachment are the path towards God. It is the secret of divine human love, manifested in Jesus' life, for he himself became the grain of wheat which fell on the earth and died. He fully delivered himself for the sake of his Body the Church. This secret of human/divine love is also the path towards marital bliss. In the first instance, it is oriented towards the other partner, and then beyond themselves to God, the fullness of life and love. Both renunciation and non-attachment are thus great values in marriage spirituality. This spirituality led Jesus to the supreme sacrifice of the Cross, not an end in itself, but the passage to life in the Spirit. Marriage therefore involves yajna (sacrifice), vrata (abstinence) and tapas (asceticism), i.e., a constant self-gift to the other and others is the guarantee of a happy and stable marriage.

e. A Spirituality of Freedom

Marriage is a school for deeper humanity. When the family experiences authentic freedom, it creates a situation in which persons can be themselves, and be able to respond to their deepest yearnings, and to others, by total self-gift, and unconditional acceptance of the other, and the Other (God). These aspects of life are constantly nurtured. Through this triple response we become whole and universal, free and authentic, no longer enslaved and subject to bondages.

f. A Spirituality of Wholeness

To live a life of the Spirit and to experience the Spirit in prayer, meditation and life-situations, one must gather one's own self

at the depth of one's being and experience wholeness. This wholeness is realized at three levels: cosmic, communitarian (social) and personal. One must transcend all forms of dualism, integrate from within one's own self the many elements, parts, senses, levels and layers of which one is composed. In other words, one should be an integral person. This is necessary for one's total health, well-being, and for the life of the spirit. Once a person realizes one's integrity, one realizes one's identity and becomes an integrated whole, and can enter into a deep-level communion with others. Hence, the second level of wholeness is our solidarity and communion with people, which finds expression in social concerns.

The third level, or dimension, of wholeness is ecological, i.e., harmony with the environment and cosmos.

By cosmic harmony we mean that our life in the world is very intimately connected with the atmosphere of the place where we live and work, with the life of the vegetation and animals, with the movement of stars and planets. The universe is one and an interrelated whole, with its various bodies interacting with one another. In this attitude and awareness, we really become conscious that this universe belongs to us as part of our being and is necessary for our wholeness, and so we must enter into communion with it from time to time. Thus, the family's way of life fosters a rhythm that is truly life-giving for the members of the family and the neighborhood.

Such a harmony is inclusive and on-going and can be found in the dynamic movements in Asia, such as the yin and the yang, where differences are complementary, in the Tao of the Chinese tradition, where the englobing unity of all reality is founded on an Absolute that is at once immanent and transcendent, and the *Atman* - Brahman of the Indian Tradition.

G. A Spirituality of the Kingdom

The family is the vital cell of society and Church. In our world, where so many families live under or around the poverty line, our responsibility for and our solidarity with the poor should be constantly nurtured and fostered. This means that husband

and wife, parents and children, must be constantly involved in a process of discernment of what realizes the Kingdom and what delays its coming. This constant discernment will greatly determine the family's lifestyle. For it places the family in the midst of the world and builds up a Christian community and a conscientized neighborhood, committed to the ushering in of the "new age", an age of love, of brotherhood and sisterhood, an age of justice and peace, of social solidarity, of all-round sharing and well-being.

The *Dharma Chakra* - the wheel of justice common to Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism - is found everywhere and should be kept moving - a moving towards *Dharma; lokasamgraha - lokakashema* One world for all in justice and solidarity.

2. Thus a Spirituality of the Family can be summarized as Follows:

	Forces that Shape the Family of Asia Today		Values that Foster Family Spirituality
1.	Profit/financial-oriented for the benefit of a few	-	Primacy of the human person in the community for meeting basic human needs.
2.	Highly personalized and individualistic for self-aggrandizement	-	Social awareness, social concern and humanization of person/community.
3.	Manipulating, exploiting and using human persons	-	Respect for the person, i.e. the individual, and promotion of human dignity, peace, justice and freedom
4.	Brutal exploitation of limited natural resources for selfish and self-centered ends	-	Social responsibility for limited resources, concern for the environment and maintaining ecobalance
5.	Cut throat and breakneck competition	-	Co-operation with and among all sections of the people
6.	Injustice and aggressively	-	Self-giving, sharing, love
7.	Hierarchical discipline, concentration of power and social control in the hands of a few	-	Co-ordinated participation and sharing, democratic procedure
8.	Emphasis on quantity and usefulness	-	Values as the criteria for judgement
9.	Consumerism	-	Communion and sharing
10.	Search for pleasure and the good life-hedonism	-	Renunciation
11.	Greed for money, power, obsession of having material goods	-	Detachment, being, spirituality
12.	Affluence, ostentation, riches waste, luxury, throw-away society	-	Simplicity of life, self-effacement, satisfied with minimum
13.	Closure on oneself	-	Openness to other, to the other to the Absolute, to transcendence

3. These Values and their Opposites are :

Creativity	Destructiveness
Freedom	Compulsion
Strength	Weakness
Independence	Dependence
Courage	Caution and retreat
Adventure	Security
Co-operation	Competition
Social Responsibility	Self-indulgence
Orderliness	Diorderliness
Generosity	Parsimony
Inner reality	Appearance, mask
Spiritual enrichment	Material acquisition and hoarding
Equality and mutual regard	Inequality and striving for power
Respect for the human being	The human being viewed as a thing, a pawn, a tool.

4. Community Building

In the last analysis the only real test of the strength of a family is its orientation to values. With a positive value-system we need to create human cells, groups, teams which join people through common goals and activities. Within such groups we revive a new hope, a kind of connectedness and mutual caring.

Such a spirituality which embodies the values of the Kingdom will help families to come together in sincere appreciation of each other and journey together as members of one human family. These families will engage in dialogue and mutual understanding, and also have a sincere appreciation for each other's religion and culture as an embodiment of the experience of transcendence, the ultimate meaning of life. It will also help families to come together in a spirit of common service, especially on issues of common and urgent concern.

Thus, in a world filled with individualism, materialism, injustice and oppression, families will be enabled to play a prophetic role. Such families will rise against the evil forces that threaten family and society,

and effectively announce with clarity the faith vision, the dignity of persons, the family and humankind.

Conclusion

The words of the Holy Father to the fifth plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family, May 1987, are appropriate:

Today, those who are aware of this spiritual and transcendental dimension of the conjugal and family union will be capable of manifesting the fruits of a generous and fecund love in society. An apostolate among families, from family to family, among spouses and Christian parents, is particularly opportune. The human and Christian well-being of persons and families, and even the peace and prosperity of society, depend to a great extent on this light, this leaven which Christian families are called to be in the world.

The same document goes on to say:

Pastoral care must be promoted which lets all the riches of conjugal spirituality be discovered. The Christian family also builds up the Kingdom of God in history through the everyday realities that concern and distinguish its state of life. It is thus in the love between husband and wife and between the members of the family — a love lived out in all its extraordinary richness of values and demands: totality, oneness, fidelity and fruitfulness (cf. Humanae Vitae, No. 9)71 — that the Christian family's participation in the prophetic, priestly and kingly mission of Jesus Christ and of his Church finds expression and realization' (FC, No. 52).[72]

IV. PROCESS PLAN FOR PASTORAL ACTION

Basic Approches Action

1. The conditions of "family" in urban, rural and slum areas in your country/diocese, affected by the force called "modernization," may be studied.

An awareness of the events and forces that pose a threat to the integrity and stability of family life in your country/diocese may be created.

2. The process of modernization may be evaluated in terms of benefits and harmful effects on "family as a unit" and "child as an individual".

   Value clarification/discernment process at the level of the family may be initiated.

2. An analysis may be done of the cultural impact of organizational societies on communitarian Asian societies, particularly Western family patterns that affect individual/country family patterns. How far Asia continues to be a communitarian society of a traditional type evolving into an organizational society with concomitant impact on family and child may be studied.

   An educational method may be evolved to address your whole country/diocese to involve the family's participation in the process of social change, analyzing specifically the transmission of faith to the child.

Guidelines for Action

1. How do we meet the challenges posed by an organizational society?

   What programs or projects can be developed at the diocesan/ national level/Prioritize.

2. How far are family patterns of Asian countries capable of resisting a negative cultural impact and contribute to a different cultural evolution.

   What programs or projects can be undertaken at the diocesan/ national level/ Prioritize.

3. How can the family survive and maintain its basic values in the present-day world, where technology is an agent of change?

   What programs or projects can be developed at national/diocesan levels —with regard to value education and clarification? Prioritize.

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V. QUESTIONS FOR WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

1. a. How do you experience the "family as a unit" in your diocese/country?

   b. What are the forces that you see that lead to disintegration and dehumanization of the family?

   c. What has been the impact of modernity on the family situation in your country?

   d. What are the challenges to family life today?

      - for the Church's community?
      - for the Church's mission?

   e. How do you evaluate the opportunities and challenges in the light of an Asian faith perspective?

2. a. How can we form persons, Christians and other believers, for their life in a technological society?

   b. What concrete steps can we take to promote the experience of family as a community and Church as communion?

   c. How do we encourage collaboration of Christian families with families of other religions in fullfilling our common prophetic mission in society?

   The role of the media — does this create an imbalance of values? How anomalous is this for family life?

3. Specify one project that your Church could take up with regard to the family, taking into account the elements or programs that would help revitalize the family?

FOOTNOTES :

1. *FC (Familiaris Consortio)*, No.6.
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3. *Ibid.*, No. 2.1.
4. *Ibid.*. No. 2.2.
5. "Family in a Technological Society," International Workshop on the Family, December 1983, Statement, No. 1, 1.1.

6. *Ibid.*, No. 1.2.
7. *Ibid.*, No. 1.4.
8. *Ibid.*, No. 1.5
9. *Ibid.*, No. 2.1.
10. *Ibid.*, No. 2.2.
11. *Ibid.*, No. 3.1.1.
12. *Ibid.*, No. 3.1.2
13. *Ibid.*, No. 3.1.3.
14. *Ibid.*, No. 3.2.1.
15. *Ibid.*, No. 3.3.1.
16. *Ibid.*, No. 3.3.2.
17. *Ibid.*, No. 3.3.4.
18. *Ibid.*, No. 3.4.1.
19. *Ibid.*, No. 3.4.2.
20. *Ibid.*, No. 4.4.3.
21. "Family and Culture," World Congress, November 1986, Statement, No. 0.3.
22. *Ibid.*, No.0.4.
23. *Ibid.*, No. 0.5.
24. *Ibid.*, No. 1.2.
25. *Ibid.*, No. 1.3.
26. *Ibid.*, No. 1.4.
27. *Ibid.*, No. 1.5.1.
28. *Ibid.*, No. 1.5.2.
29. *Ibid.*, No. 1.5.3.
30. *Ibid.*, No. 1.6.
31. *Ibid.*, No. 2.1.
32. *Ibid.*, No. 2.2.
33. *Ibid.*, No. 2.3.
34. *Ibid.*, No. 2.4.
35. *Ibid.*, No. 2.5.
36. *Ibid.*, No. 2.6.
37. *Ibid.*, No. 2.7.

38. *Ibid.*, No. 2.8.

39. *Ibid.*, No. 2.9.

40. "International Congress on the Family," March 1991, Statement No. 1.

41. *Ibid.*, No. 1.2.

42. *Ibid.*, No. 1.2.2.

43. *Ibid.*, No. 1.2.1.

44. *Ibid.*, No. 1.2.3.

45. *Ibid.*, No. 1.2.4.

46. *Ibid.*, No. 1.2.5.

47. *Ibid.*, No. 1.2.6.

48. *Ibid.*, No. 1.3.

49. *Ibid.*, No. 2.

50. *Ibid.*, No. 2.1.

51. *Ibid.*, No. 2.1.1.

52. *Ibid.*, No. 2.1.2.

53. *Ibid.*, No. 2.2.

54. Agri Missio - April 15-19; "Children at the Centre", International Conference on Agriculture and Environment, July 1991.

55. Ibid

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57. Chow Hiew, in *Children Worldwide* - Issue International Year of The Family, "Child Resilience Programs: A Response to Sexually Exploited."

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59. *Ibid.*

60. Editorial - "The Role of The Family in Conflict Resolution," *Asia Link*, Hong Kong, vol. 16, No. 1,1994.

61. *Ibid.*

62. Ep. 3:15, quoted in *Humanae Vitae*, encyclical letter of Pope Paul VI, 1968, No. 8.

63. *FC (Familiaris Consortio)*, No. 21.

64. *GS (Gaudium Et Spes)*, No. 50.

65. *Ibid.*, No. 50.

66. *FC*, No. 52.

67. *Ibid.*, from *Lumen Gentium*, No. 35.

68. *FC*, No. 86.

69. *CA (Centesimus Annus)*, No. 39.

70. D.S. Amalorpavadass, Keynote address, World Congress Family and Culture, Madras, India, 1986.

71. *HV "Humanae Vitae)*, No. 9.

72. *FC (Familiaris Consortio)*, No. 50.

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A PROFILE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sr. Catherine Bernard is a member of the Sisters of the Cross (Chavanod, France). She is Foundress - Executive Director of the Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture - Madras, India.

She is a graduate (1974) from St. John's Medical College with a Bachelor's Degree in Medicine and Surgery (M.B.B.S.)

She has a Master's Degree (1991) (MS) in Religion and Religious Education from Fordham University, New York, USA.

Sr. Catherine Bernard has over twenty years of experience in Family Ministry. She was the `first Secretary to the Tamil·Nadu Regional Bishop's Commission on the Family, during which time she founded The Society for Family Integrity and Development - Tiruchirapalli, India.

She has also held important offices in India and abroad and travelled extensively in Asia, her own country, India, in Africa, Europe, Central America, the United States, Canada and Australia, reading scientific papers in National and International Conferences, and training persons, assisting Dioceses and National Commissions for the Family establish Family Life Centres.

She has been interviewed by the Television, Press and Radio during her travels and by Radio Vatican several times during her travels in Europe.

She has organised Four International Congresses on the Family in Madras, India, authored numerous articles on Family in its various aspects and several books on Scientific Natural Family Planning.

During these years of Ministry, Sr. Catherine Bernard has cut across religious, social and sociological barriers to bring the message of `Wholeness' to all peoples and families.

Sr. Catherine Bernard has received two UN awards for her work on the Family and served as consultant to several international organisations working on the family. She is Founderess, Director of the Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture (SERFAC) - Madras, India. This centre serves as a Multi-Religious Family Life and Family Spirituality Centre for all families of good will.

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